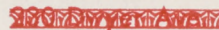


DESK NOTES

Religion

CATHOLIC COUNCIL FOR THE SPANISH SPEAKING

B.C.S.S. Regional Office



San Antonio 5, Texas
Oppenheimer Bldg.

September 17, 1956

THE BRACERO QUESTION

We were all disturbed last year when we read about the "Cotton-patch Crusade" that the Baptists led in the Pecos area. There some 15,000 braceros were subject to a great deal of Protestant propaganda; thousands, we were told, accepted Christ and publicity of this "Great Revival" spread all over the United States. As matters turned out, however, this "Cotton-patch Crusade" boomeranged.

The Mexican clergy and Hierarchy were disturbed by these reports and complained to the Mexican government that the braceros were the victims of this proselytizing in the United States. The Mexican government upheld the complaint and sent a letter of protest to the State Department in Washington. There was fear that the whole bracero program would fall apart unless something was done to protect the bracero from the enemies of his Religion. However, this is a free country and this was a very delicate point.

The Department of Labor had to be very careful so as not to give anyone the impression that it was siding with any particular religion. Article XXIII of the Standard Work Contract as amended was a good starting point. The article reads as follows:

"PROTECTION FROM IMMORAL AND ILLEGAL INFLUENCES: ... The employer agrees to take all reasonable steps to keep professional gamblers, vendors of intoxicating liquors and other persons engaged in immoral and illegal activities away from the Mexican Workers' place of employment."

The Department of Labor of this country, besides maintaining vigilance and supervision over the employers and workers for compliance with this requirement of the Standard Work Contract, as amended, now proposes to take preventive measures. Their ef-

forts would be limited to obtaining permission from the employers, the cooperation of the Priests and ministers and the concurrence of the workers to arrange and hold religious services once a week in each camp and according to the religion professed by those living at each camp.

It would have to be explained to the Mexican workers that participation in any religious service is absolutely voluntary; that they should respect the Religion of others not of their Faith. Now, practically 99 % of the braceros are Catholic so it would seem unreasonable for any Protestant minister to come into a Labor Camp looking for Baptists, Methodists, etc.

As you will see from the memorandums that I am enclosing, the representative of the Department of Labor in the Rio Grande Valley was very diplomatic. He did a very good job of arranging a Religious program with the different Farm Associations and the Catholic Priests. As a result, thousands of braceros had the consolation of attending Mass on Sundays and receiving the Sacraments frequently.

The enclosed memorandums tell an eloquent story of the influence of the Catholic Church on the lives of the Mexican Nationals and it is just a beginning.

CONVENTION IN MONTERREY

On the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of October there will be a meeting of Priests from Texas and Priests from the other side of the Rio Grande in Monterrey. The idea of this meeting is to better understand the bracero problem. We look at this problem from one angle and the Priests in Mexico look at it from another angle. By getting together and exchanging our ideas we will undoubtedly understand and see the picture much more clearly. ?

If you, as a member of the Catholic Council, would like to attend

this Convention in Monterrey please write to this office and I will be glad to give you more details. Here is the tentative program:

Oct. 1 Registration (Afternoon and evening)
Oct. 2 Morning

"MEXICAN MIGRANT PROBLEM IN THE UNITED STATES"

(a) Legal and Social-economical aspect

-- Rev. R. A. McGowan and a Mexican priest

(b) Religious-moral aspect

-- Rev. W. Nash, O. M. I. and a Mexican priest

Discussion

Afternoon

"EXSUL FAMILIA" in general with emphasis on Special faculties granted by the Holy See.

-- Rev. W. D. O'Connor, O. M. I.

Discussion

Oct. 3 Morning

"FACING PROBLEM OBJECTIVELY"

-- Rev. Carlos Quintana and a Mexican priest

"PASTORAL CARE"

-- Mr. Bernard V. Fox and a Mexican labor representative

Afternoon

Organization of the "SECRETARIADO SACERDOTAL MEXICO/AMERICANO"

Note: - The individual contributions of speakers must be very brief and the discussion groups must consist of both American and Mexican representatives indiscriminately.

FIRST COMMUNION CATECHISM

Father P. E. Koechel, a Maryknoll Priest has prepared an excellent Catechism in Spanish for the First Communicant. If you are interested in getting it he will be happy to send you a copy for your approval if you write to him at this address: Maryknoll P. O., New York. The price is \$2.75 per hundred copies.

Rev. William D. O'Connor, O. M. I.
Executive Secretary